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Tajuk : RM 4.9M For Mangrove Replanting.

RM4.9m for mangrove replanting

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KUCHING: A massive allocation of RM4.9 million has been approved for the replanting of mangrove trees and other plant species in the coastal areas of the state to restore and preserve the wetland ecosystem.

Sarawak Forestry Department Deputy Director Wan Shardini Wan Salleh disclosed that the project was first launched in 2006 and up to date, 32 locations in Kuching, Miri, Sibul and Bintulu were included.

"Up to date, we have planted 644,787 mangrove seedlings from various species through the cooperation of participants from primary schools to Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)," he said.

For this year, the ministry is planting 7,187 mangrove seedlings (of the ringworm species) on a land area covering 11.5 hectares in the Kuching Wetlands National Park (KWNP).

A collaborative programme with PETRONAS involves 250 students from schools in the district

to plant 1,000 mangrove seedlings on a 5-hectare wetland allocated in KWNP.

"Under this collaboration, a total of 3,000 seedlings will be planted in the next two years under the EcoBako programme," Shardini said in his speech at the launching ceremony of the programme at the KWNP here yesterday morning.

"The State Forest Department is also actively promoting KWNP as an attractive tourist eco resort, which will indirectly improve the state's economy and protect the endangered species for future generations.

"The plan includes conservation, planning and promotion of Bako National Park which is known for its biodiversity of flora and fauna, Santubong National Park which is famous as a transit point and Gulf Buntal hornbill, a bird migration stopover from around the world," said Shardini.

Shardini explained that two locations have been widely introduced - the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre and National Park Dome.

The National Park Dome

records 80 unique plant species, 10 species of the pitcher plant and 60 species of frogs including the world's smallest frog, *Microhyla nepenthicola*.

"It is also important to promote KWNP due to the existence of dolphins in the waters around the area and the Lemidin River which is home to over 20 species of crocodiles," he said.

According to Shardini, a marketing plan has been drafted and will be presented to the Ministry of Tourism for long term benefits.

PETRONAS, he said, is the only company actively participating in efforts to conserve the environment under its social service programme.

Also present at the function were PETRONAS General Manager Shamsur Taha and senior officials of the company and the Forestry Department.

SHARDINI (left) and Shamsur at the tree planting ceremony at KWNP in Bako.

